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Bonn Lets East German Return

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BONN, July 21 — West Germany allowed an East German economist suspected of espionage to return home today.

A Bonn Government spokesman said the economist, Herbert Meissner, the deputy head of the East German Academy of Sciences, was allowed to return to East Germany after the Bonn Federal Prosecutor dropped a warrant for his arrest and an investigation into charges that he was a spy.

Mr. Meissner, 59 years old, had been in the East German Mission here since last week, unable to leave West Germany without risking arrest.

The West German spokesman, Friedhelm Ost, said the Government "regretted that East Berlin sought through unfounded reproaches to turn this into a political burden."

Under West German law the Government can request that an investigation be dropped if pursuing it would damage national interests.

East Germany had accused Bonn of abducting him and demanded his immediate release.

In a curious case of double defection, Mr. Meissner, after being detained in West Berlin earlier this month for shoplifting, volunteered information to

West German intelligence authorities about what he said was his spying activities for East Germany. Several days later, however, he fled the authorities and took refuge in the diplomatic mission.

In an interview broadcast on East German television, evidently taped in the mission, Mr. Meissner told a strange tale of kidnapping, drugs and blackmail. He asserted that he had been abducted by the West, drugged so he would confess to spying and pressed to betray East Germany.

The case threatened to burden relations between the two Germanys, which were already strained by the large number of political refugees from third-world countries who have flowed into West Germany by way of East Berlin in recent months. The refugees are flown to East Berlin and then directed into the Western part of the city, to which they have unlimited access because the three Western Allied powers who occupy Berlin refuse to install border controls.

The problem has taken such proportions here that Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, visiting Moscow this week, was scheduled to discuss it with Soviet leaders in hopes that they would put pressure on East Germany.

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